

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

APRIL 1987

ONE DOLLAR



SPECIAL FISHING ISSUE

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

"Give me a satchel and a fishing rod and I could hie myself off and keep busy at thinking forever." —Thomas A. Edison

As I sit here waiting for the clouds to break up, my thoughts turn to water. Quick water, running fast and cold. A friend of mine insists that we visit a spring-fed trout stream this year, one that is quiet, slow, and open flowing through a pasture. It allows for thoughtful talk, he says.

But, I'm not happy about it. I'd rather be on a noisy creek, hidden by rhododendron and rocks, and deep in the shade. On a stream that takes light in small shafts, unexpectedly. One that has wet moss and the amoeba-like pale green of liverwort sticking to rocks.

I like that kind of place. I like crawling up over boulders twice as big as I am and peeping over the top, fly line in hand, ready to drop it over ever so lightly into the tail end of a pool or bounce it gently off a boulder. Then I hold my breath and watch.

Yes, I could fish a small farm pond in the heat of a summer's day, with the sun blocking out shadows. Or I could fish that same pond on a long shadowed evening, just about the time spring peepers start conversing amongst themselves along the edges.

Or I could sit in a boat on the Pamunkey River and line up my fishing rods, a minnow struggling at the end of each, and reel in the perch that jerk the lines in quick succession. I could sit in a johnboat all day, balancing a rod against my knees, laughing at my partner and his stories, his elaborate baiting of hooks, and his off-key singing with the radio we've brought along. And I could chat with the sunburned folks in white t-shirts in the boats anchored close to ours, or stare at the mudflats downriver, covered with small shorebirds making tracks across them. And I could watch the shadows move in at the end of the day along with the fish crows flapping to roost. Always, though, I'm ready to pull up the anchor, ready to help pull in the lines and pack up the rods and head for the landing with a decent sunburn, and a stringer of fish I don't want to clean.

But, when I'm on those jabbering streams, it's different. I forget to look up at the sky. Instead, I nick my nose on rocks and get moss underneath my fingernails, straining to make cast from the rim of a boulder. And from the awkward balancing, my back starts to hurt, my legs start to cramp, and I get hot inside the chest waders that were never made for a small person. I have been known to take them off and sit in the stream till I'm numb.

There, I never count the number of fish I've caught. I never look up until I have to squint into the water, realizing that the light is retreating. The sun is sinking. I've never come off a stream until dark.

And therein lies the *goodness* of fishing. Water that you can't leave 'till dark, water that keeps you out so late that you end up losing a lure and stumbling over rod and line and reel, is good water. Because, those that go out on water they have a liking for, return with the same kind of look. Good water takes care of the evil spirits inside.

Like I said, I'm waiting for the clouds to break overhead. Waiting for the weather to clear. I'm *still* not keen on wading into a stream opening up on a pasture, but there are some pretty fish up in the Blue Ridge I feel like sneaking up on.

Virginia Lepore

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April Issue

Volume 48, Number 4



This month's issue is dedicated to the fish that find shelter and the humans that find peace of mind in the waters of the mighty James River.

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Surprise snapper fishing on Smith Mountain Lake; photo by Roy Edwards
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Fish Tricks

on the Tidal James

Want to know how to fish a tidal river?
Read on.

by Jack Randolph

Sitting in a jon boat casting to largemouth bass with a seagoing steamship cruising a few hundred yards away has always seemed to be sort of a study in contrasts. Yet, that's the way it is on the tidal portion of the James River from the fall line in Richmond all the way downstream to Jamestown. These waters, from Richmond's Deepwater Terminal downstream are deep enough for commerce and productive enough for any angler who has ever wet a line.

The strong ocean tides surge through the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay with a direct shot at the James. They forge their way inland, past Newport News, past Jamestown and beyond Hopewell. They hold the river in their grip until they meet the fall line, under the Route 95 bridge in Richmond where the strong freshwater flows force them back. The entire James River below Richmond is tidal, which means the river flows out for about six hours, then turns around and flows in the opposite direction.

To survive in a tidal stream, a fish must learn to adapt to an ever changing



illustrations by Michael Simon

Largemouth bass, walleye, crappie, and striped bass are just some of the fish that lurk in the waters of the James from the fall line in Richmond downstream to Jamestown; photo by Michael R. McCormack.

environment. In most inland streams, where the current always moves in the same direction, a fish may select a feeding or resting station, which always faces into the current, and simply stay there. This is also true in a lake where current is seldom a factor. In a tidal river, however, the direction of flow changes four times each day, and a fish is forced to change direction each time the tide changes.

The fish that live in these tidal freshwaters learn to cope with a large variety of predators, including some natives of saltwater, such as bluefish on an inshore lark during a dry year. They also take advantage of exotic foods, such as blue crabs and a wide variety of saltwater or anadromous minnows. The result is an extremely vital fish with more muscular development than his cousins from the still waters. Large-mouth bass fishermen will tell you that a bass taken from our tidal streams will outfight his cousins from still waters.

Tournament bass fishermen are well aware of the top quality bass fishing available in the tidal James and many of

Bass

From its birth, at the confluence of the Jackson and Cowpasture rivers downstream to Richmond, the James is recognized as the premier smallmouth bass river of Virginia, if not the entire country. A few smallmouths can be found in the river below Richmond, particularly in rocky areas, as far downstream as Presquile Isle above Hopewell. However, from the fall line below the I-95 bridge in Richmond downstream to Jamestown, the James belongs to the largemouth.

James River largemouths seldom reach citation size, which is eight pounds, but their average size is somewhat larger than found in most lakes. The fish are chunkier than their still water counterparts and, when hooked, they fight as if there were no tomorrow.

Some of the best bass fishing is

the James and there are several excellent creeks that flow into the Chickahominy that offer outstanding fishing.

Before the advent of the bass boat, most of the river and tidal creeks were lightly fished, being the private province of landowners on the creeks. Now, far ranging bass boats run 50 miles or more along the river, fishing any creek that meets their fancy. However, the James is a tricky stream. One has to be familiar with it to avoid crashing upon a shoal or running into submerged pilings and net stakes. The tidal rivers are full of hidden hazards for the boater. It is not unusual to encounter huge, half-submerged logs floating in the river.

Bass can be taken in the river proper or in the creeks and gravel pits. It is smart to become acquainted with these waters at low tide when more of the sunken logs, pilings and rock piles are visible. This is the kind of cover bass prefer and the successful angler, once he has located it, can find it on any tide.

Most bass fishermen prefer to fish the James and the creeks on the out-



its tributaries, but the big river has much more to offer. The fresh and brackish waters of the tidal James are also home to striped bass, walleye, crappie, white perch, pickerel, white catfish, channel catfish, blue catfish, yellow perch, bowfin, carp, American shad, hickory shad, alewives and blue-back herring, and others. Most of these fish are abundant and capable of providing any angler with a day he'll not easily forget.

found in the tidal creeks and flooded gravel pits on either side of the river. Some of the better known streams include Grays, Powhatan, Wards, Chippokes, Queen, Herring and Swift Creeks. The Appomattox and Chickahominy Rivers are also tributaries of

going tide. The water is generally clearer on a falling tide. Further, as the tide rises, the fish often move out of the creeks into the guts that cut through the surrounding marshes, returning to the main streams on the falling tide. Fishing near the mouths of these guts on the dropping tide is often worthwhile.

It is, of course, possible to catch fish on the incoming tide. One must realize that fish face into the current and when

the tide changes, fish change their position. The trick is to learn where fish hold on either tide. During the brief interval between tides, baitfish become disoriented and swim about aimlessly. This is often an excellent opportunity to catch bass as they feed on top of these minnows.

If there is a rule for fishing the tidal rivers, it would probably be to fish with the current. Lures retrieved with the current seem to produce better than those pulled against the tide.

In the winter and spring, lead head plastic grubs, such as the Mann's Sting Ray are popular. Spinner baits are also very productive if worked slowly during the periods when the water is cool. Favored crankbaits include the Bombers and Rebels with such fluorescent colors as fire tiger preferred.

Later in the season plastic worms are hard to beat, but top water baits worked tight to the cypress trees are often deadly.

Most modern bass boats are fitted with electric motors which are employed to hold position while casting; but although it is not nearly as "cool," it is more effective to use a light anchor on a long rope to hold position in the always moving tide. Simply drop the anchor and let the boat drift back its entire length. Fish a bit, then shorten up on the rope and fish the next stretch, until the anchor has to be reset.

Walleye

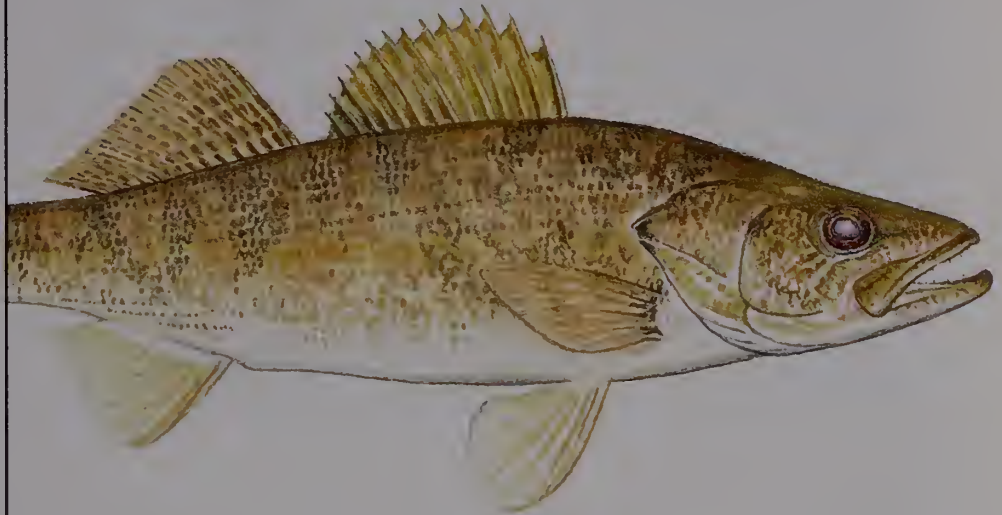
Walleye are "new" fish in the river. Over the years, occasional walleyes would mysteriously appear from who knows where. Several years ago the Game Commission started a stocking program in the river and the result has been a fair to middling fishery. Walleyes topping 10 pounds have been landed, but the average is closer to two. The best time to catch them is in the early spring and late fall.

The best walleye fishing is from the fall line in Richmond down to the Appomattox River. So far, no concentrations of these fine eating fish have been reported below the Appomattox. Some of the best walleye action is in the immediate vicinity of the I-95 bridge.

In the James, various types of jigs have proven to be reasonably good

walleye lures. The Mr. Twister Sassy Shad, the three-inch version on a quarter-ounce jig head has been effective, particularly if fished slowly, close to the bottom and in the late afternoon or at night. A white twister tail on an unpainted quarter or three-eighths-ounce lead head is also effective.

Quite a few walleye also have been taken on Rebel and Bomber crankbaits. Anglers fishing near the I-95 bridge find these crankbaits to be productive. They also use light white bucktail jigs garnished with a white



twister tail with some success, particularly in the white water immediately below the small falls found in that area.

Live baits, such as minnows or nightcrawlers, are fine walleye baits, but are not generally productive because of the numerous catfish and perch that get to the bait first.

Crappie

The tidal creeks that feed into the river are often excellent for crappie. They are also found in the many gravel pits along the river.

Some of the better creeks for crappie include Swift Creek, Herring Creek, Wards Creek, Chippokes Creek, Grays Creek and of course, the Chickahominy River and its many tributary creeks.

These river crappie are often large, with three-pounders not entirely unknown and four-pounders a possibility. This writer saw one four-pounder that came out of Herring Creek. Live minnows fished close to pilings, fallen trees or boat houses are productive.

They will also hit small jigs presented in the same locations. Crappie jigs baited with minnows are particularly deadly.

Crappie fishing is best from March through May and from October through December. Some crappie caught in these waters are "wormy," being infested with a tiny worm that offers no danger to humans once the fish is cooked. This worm, a nematode, passes through an interesting cycle that involves wading birds, a particular species of snail and fish.

White Perch

White perch are not as abundant in the river as they were before the early 70s when a mysterious die-off literally wiped out the perch population in the river. They are usually encountered in March and April when they make their spawning runs up the river. Good locations for catching them include deeper holes in the Chickahominy River, the Appomattox River and around the sunken barges near Hopewell. They are also often abundant in the riverside gravel pits.

These perch, which are really members of the bass family, are best taken on medium-size live minnows. They will also hit spinners baited with worms. They will often take small jigs, spinners or spinner baits, but usually not with the same consistency as with live bait.

Yellow Perch

These good-eating fish are usually taken in the early spring near the fall line of the tributary streams where they



It's hard to believe that the fishing can be so good on the James in Richmond with a city on the shoreline; photo by Roy Edwards



come to spawn. Swift Creek, Falling Creek, and the Chickahominy are often excellent.

Like white perch, yellow perch, which are true perch and not related to white perch, will take minnows and worms and some small artificial lures. One live bait seldom used locally, but very effective, nevertheless, is the small grass shrimp commonly found in our brackish tidal waters.

Striped Bass

Tidal striped bass have suffered in recent years and their populations in the Chesapeake Bay system have declined to alarming lows. Because of this, stringent regulations have been imposed by the Marine Resources Commission to protect the species. Presently, they may be taken only between June 1 and December 1. Only five may be taken daily and the minimum size is 24 inches. Hybrid striped bass, when found in tidal water are considered to be striped bass and must be included in the daily creel limit and must also be 24 inches in length.

The Game Commission has stocked millions of stripers in the James since 1976 and fishing in the river is moderately good. Most fish are taken at night on crankbaits and bucktails around lights near bridges in the river. Quite a few are caught in the Appomattox on bucktails and top water plugs. The Sassy Shad has been effective on stripers in the river.

Hybrid Stripers

Hybrid striped bass, a cross between the white bass and the striper, have found their way into the river. They are relatively common in the Appomattox and in the James upstream from Petersburg. A few have found their way into the Chickahominy.

These hybrids will outfight a striper and they are great fun to catch. Many anglers believe that the broken stripes, so often found on hybrids, is a positive identification of the species. This is not true. Striped bass with broken stripes are not at all uncommon. In the tidal waters, below the fall lines, they are considered to be striped bass and are subject to the 24-inch minimum size limit and must be included as striped bass in the five fish per day creel limit.

Above the fall line, mainly above the

Best Months for Fishing in the Tidal James

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Largemouth Bass			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Walleye			●	●	●				●	●	●	
Crappie			●	●	●				●	●	●	●
White Perch		●	●	●								
Yellow Perch		●	●	●								
Striped Bass						●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Hybrid Striped Bass						●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Catfish					●	●	●	●				
Herring			●	●	●							
Shad			●	●	●							

powerhouse in the Appomattox River which is the primary river for this species, freshwater rules apply and the minimum size limit is 15 inches and the daily limit is four.

Hybrids are very aggressive fish and will hit most lures intended for striped bass. Sassy Shads, minnow-shaped floating plugs and bucktails are very effective. In Lake Chesdin, on the Appomattox River, chicken livers are a good bait.

Catfish

The James is home to channel catfish, white catfish and bullheads, which are often called "mudcats." Several years ago the Game Commission introduced blue catfish into the river and they are appearing in the catches. Blues in the Rappahannock have exceeded 30 pounds and there's no reason to believe they will not attain comparable size in the James.

Commercial fishermen take large numbers of cats in traps and haul seines in the river. Hook and line fish-

ing for these species is excellent with great numbers of fish available through the freshwater and brackish stretches of the river. Although they may be encountered virtually anywhere, the warm water outflow from the Surry Power Plant is a hot spot during cold weather.

Channel catfish will hit artificial lures and this writer has taken them on Mepps spinners, Rebels, plastic worms, Lucky 13's and other baits. However, for consistent results, live bait is superior. Among the better baits are minnows, nightcrawlers, "stink" baits, cut pieces of fresh fish (particularly eel), snapping turtle livers, chicken livers, and for big channel cats no bait is better than a small, live white perch.

The best catfish action occurs from May through September, except, of course, in a warm water environment such as that found off the Surry Power Plant.

Herring

Two species of river herring invade

the river in March and April. These are the common alewife and the blueback herring. The two species are nearly identical. Local anglers often call the gizzard shad "alewives," but the true alewife is locally known as herring. The gizzard shad, which is not used as food, derives its nourishment from feeding on the bottom and does not take a lure.

Many herring are taken by dip netters in the many creeks that run into the James. Hook and line herring fishing is popular in the Chickahominy at Walkers Dam, the Appomattox at the power plant and in Richmond at the fall line.

At Walkers Dam, netting herring is illegal, but a great many are caught using plain gold hooks. For some unknown reason, the herring strike gold hooks as if they were a lure. It is illegal to snag herring, so they must be hooked in the mouth.

On the Appomattox and the James, tiny bucktails, called "shad darts" are very effective. They are cast across the

current and retrieved slowly. On light tackle, such as ultra-light spinning gear, the one pound herring give an excellent account of themselves.

Hickory and American Shad

Both the American or white shad and the hickory shad used to be extremely plentiful in the river, but their numbers have declined alarmingly. Hickories were at one time plentiful in the Appomattox and the Chickahominy, but now they are taken only rarely. Sport and commercial netters also testify to the declining numbers of American shad in the river. From a hook and line standpoint, both of these fish are now scarce in the river. Normally, they would be expected in April and May, when they would hit shad darts with gusto.

Other Species

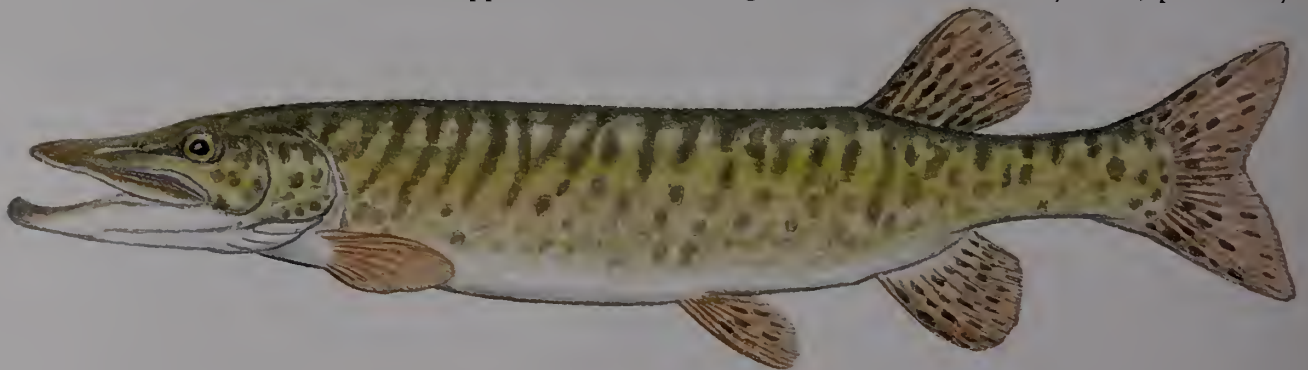
James River anglers are often surprised to encounter fish not normally expected in these waters. Pickerel are relatively common in the upper reaches of the tidal creeks feeding into the river. An 11-pound musky was taken in the Appomattox at Petersburg some

Occasionally, particularly during periods of drought, saltwater fish move up the river. It is not uncommon for anglers casting for bass to hook bluefish. Small spot and some flounder also find their way into areas usually regarded as freshwater.

One frequent visitor to the freshwater tidal areas that often gives plastic worm fishermen fits is the blue crab. These feisty little critters love to chop worms into little pieces. The angler usually senses a strike, but after attempting to set the hook, finds he has nothing but half a worm.

No mention of the James would be complete without taking in the beauty of this river. Its forest-clad banks and cathedral-like cypress groves must be experienced to be appreciated.

Wildlife abounds along this stretch of the river. Ospreys nest here and deer, sometimes in small herds, routinely swim completely across the river, more than a mile in places. Turkeys are not uncommon along the shores and a cautious observer will see otters playing along the banks. Beavers have moved into many areas, particularly



years ago. Another small one was reported in the upper reaches of Bailey's Creek this year. Muskies are stocked in the upper upper reaches of the James, near Buchanan, so it is possible that some would show up downstream.

A huge sturgeon was found dead in the river some years ago and a few are reported in nets from time to time.

Carp offer excellent bowfishing opportunities in April, particularly at Hog Island and in the tidal creeks. Long nose gar are also available in large numbers. Bowfin, called "grinnel," frequently grab bass baits, giving anglers a battle to retrieve their lures.

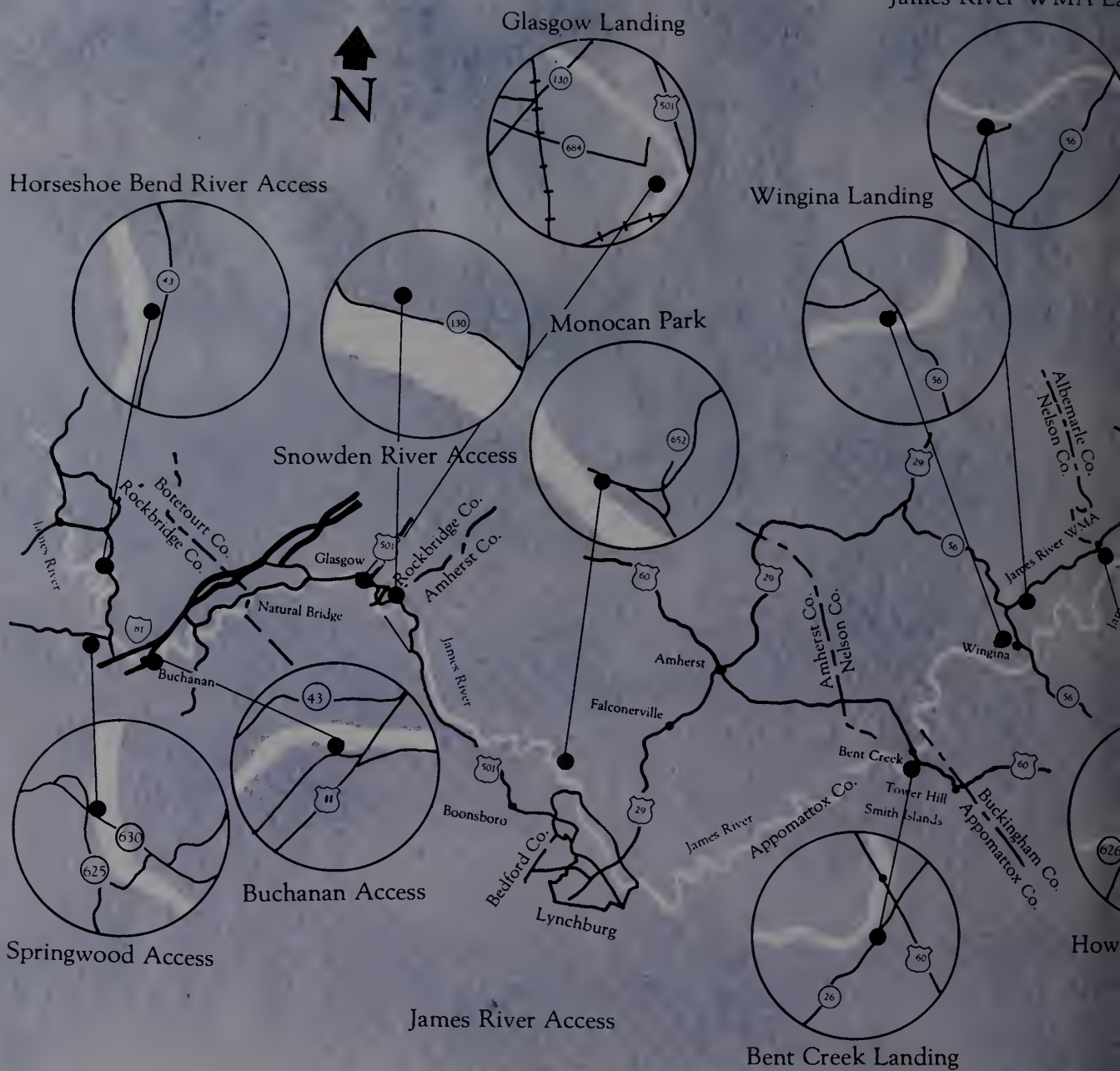
Swift Creek and the Chickahominy and mink, while rare, are present. Muskrats are common and waterfowl, particularly in the spring and fall, are reasonably abundant. Songbirds thrive in the marshes, often feeding on the wild rice found here, and birds of prey, including majestic eagles and wading birds can be seen frequently.

The tidal James has a great deal to offer and when you visit it you can't help but feel the presence of Captain John Smith and the early pioneers who held the river in awe, as I am sure you will too. □

Jack Randolph is assistant director of the Game Commission and an avid fisherman.

James River Float Trips

The Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries has worked hard to provide access on the 212 river miles between Eagle Rock and Richmond for the canoeist, the kayaker, and the jon boater. This stretch of the James begins in Rockbridge County, encompassing sweeping views of the Allegheny and Blue Ridge mountains, flows through the Piedmont, and into Richmond. Those toting a fishing rod and a few good lures should find some hefty smallmouth bass in these waters. Remember always to bring along a topographical map on your trip, so that the dangerous riffle areas can be identified. And don't forget your fishing license and the required personal flotation devices for each person in your boat. The James is waiting. □



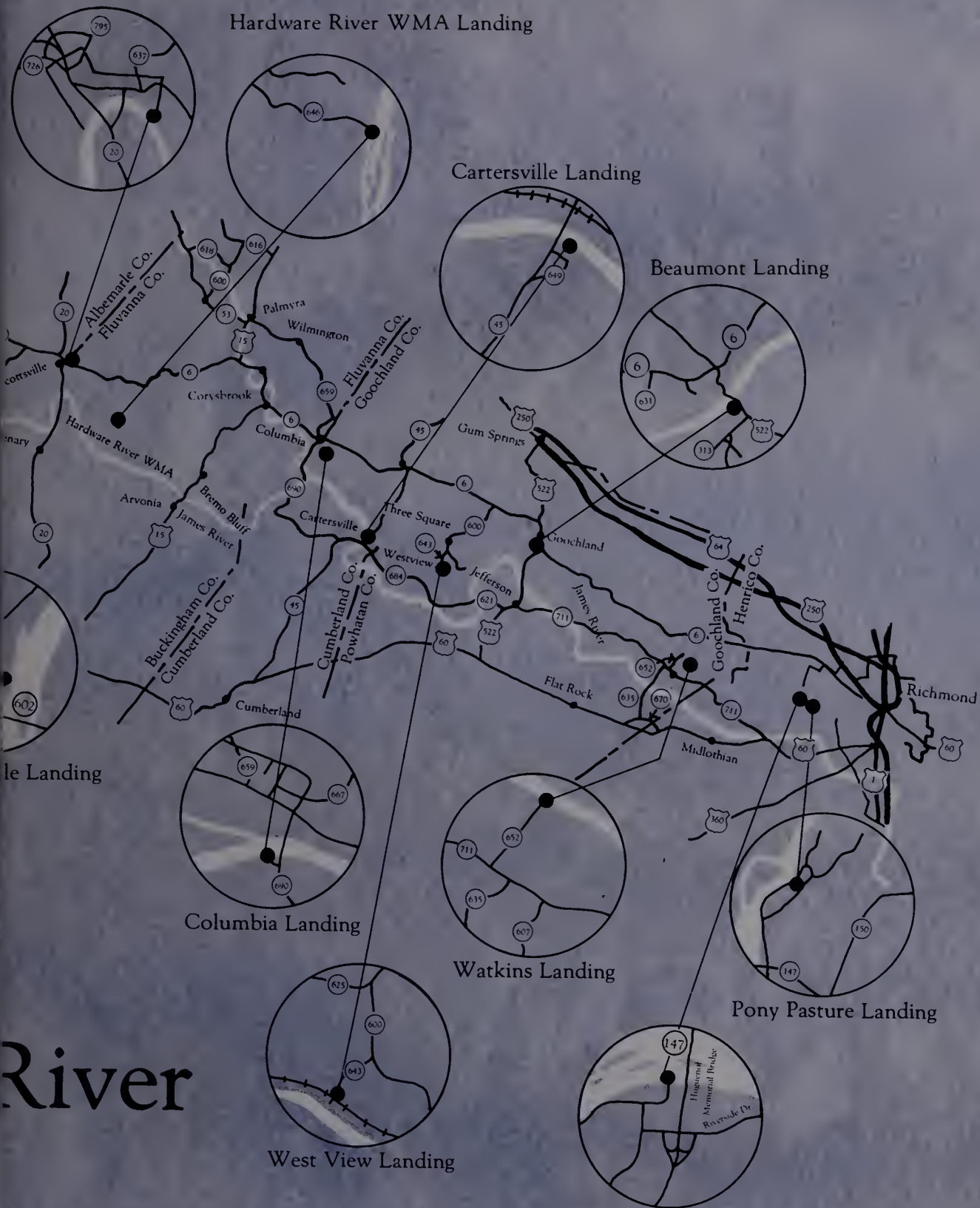
Floating the James

Scottsville Landing

Hardware River WMA Landing

Cartersville Landing

Beaumont Landing



River

Huguenot Woods River Access

Below is a description of several one-day canoe trips you can plan on the James River. Starting upriver, match the trips with the points on the map inside. Fishing between Eagle Rock and Richmond is excellent. Smallmouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish are the most popular species sought by anglers. **Caution:** There are seven dangerous dams on the river between Snowden and Lynchburg and five in the city of Richmond. Check a topographical map before attempting to float these stretches. **Remember:** Personal flotation devices are required for each person in any boat, including canoes and kayaks.

Eagle Rock to Horseshoe Bend:

Paddle time: 4-6 hours. Numerous Class I-II riffles. Exceptional mountain scenery and vistas.

Horseshoe Bend to Springwood:

Paddle time: 2-4 hours. Beautiful mountain scenery, numerous Class I-II riffles. Takeout on river right underneath Rt. 630 bridge.

Springwood to Buchanan:

Paddle time: 3-5 hours. Muskie country, good fishing in numerous deep holes. Takeout on river right in Town of Buchanan.

Buchanan to Glasgow:

Paddle time: 8-10 hours. Many Class I-II riffles. Numerous mountain vistas. Primitive U.S. Forest Service canoe-in campsites located on river right, 13 and 15 miles below Buchanan and Glasgow. James River Recreation Area (privately-owned campground) on river right three miles upstream from Glasgow. General stores at Eagle Rock and Buchanan.

Glasgow to Snowden:

Paddle time: 2-3 hours. One of the most beautiful reaches of the entire James, as the river cuts through the Blue Ridge Mountains. Numerous Class I-II riffles. Balcony Falls, a major Class IV rapid, should be scouted carefully. James River Face Wilderness Area on river right. General store at Snowden. Takeout on river left up Rocky Row Run under Route 501/130 bridge.

Smith Islands:

Two and one half miles upstream from Bent Creek. Primitive canoe-in camping, picnicking, etc. on two large islands owned by Westvaco Corporation and made available to the public through a cooperative agreement with the state. No facilities. Please be careful with fires

and carry out all trash, so that paddlers may continue to use these beautiful islands.

Bent Creek to Wingina:

Paddle time: 5-7 hours. Numerous Class I-II riffles, several islands. Store at Bent Creek.

Wingina to James River W.M.A.

Paddle time: 1-3 hours. Numerous islands and Class I-II riffles.

James River W.M.A. to Howardsville:

Paddle time: 4-6 hours. Numerous islands. Class I-II riffles, no danger points. General store at Howardsville.

Howardsville to Scottsville:

Paddle time: 4-6 hours. Access site at Howardsville. Scenic stretch with few riffles, numerous small islands. Intermediate access at Warren Ferry (not operating) six miles below Howardsville, and 8.5 miles below Howardsville at Hatton Ferry on river left.

Scottsville to Hardware River W.M.A.:

Paddle time: 2-3 hours. Upper four miles flat, lower two miles very scenic, studded with numerous wooded islands. Takeout on river left.

Hardware to Brema Bluff:

Paddle time: 2-3 hours. Scenic section of river. Channel braided by dozens of large and small islands. Numerous Class I-II riffles. No danger points at normal river levels. No formal access at Brema Bluff. Takeout downstream from Route 15 bridge on river right to be developed soon.

Crofton Bridge (Route 600) to Palmyra: (Rivanna River)

Paddle time: 3-4 hours. Good fishing with several historical canal locks visible.

Palmyra (Route 15) to Columbia: (Rivanna River)

Paddle time: 4-6 hours. Interesting trip with Class I ledges providing good fishing and excitement. Takeout on river right after entering James River.

Brema Bluff to Columbia:

Paddle time: 3-5 hours. Predominantly flat stretch with several islands. Scenic heavily wooded hills on river right. General store at Columbia. Takeout on river right at the bridge.

Columbia to Cartersville:

Paddle time: 3-5 hours. Predominantly flat stretch with fair scenery. No danger points. General stores at Columbia and Cartersville. Takeout below bridge on river right.

Cartersville to West View:

Paddle time: 2-3 hours. Flat stretch, bounded on river right by steep heavily wooded hillsides that provide nice backdrop to river vistas. Takeout on left, opposite island.

West View to Beaumont:

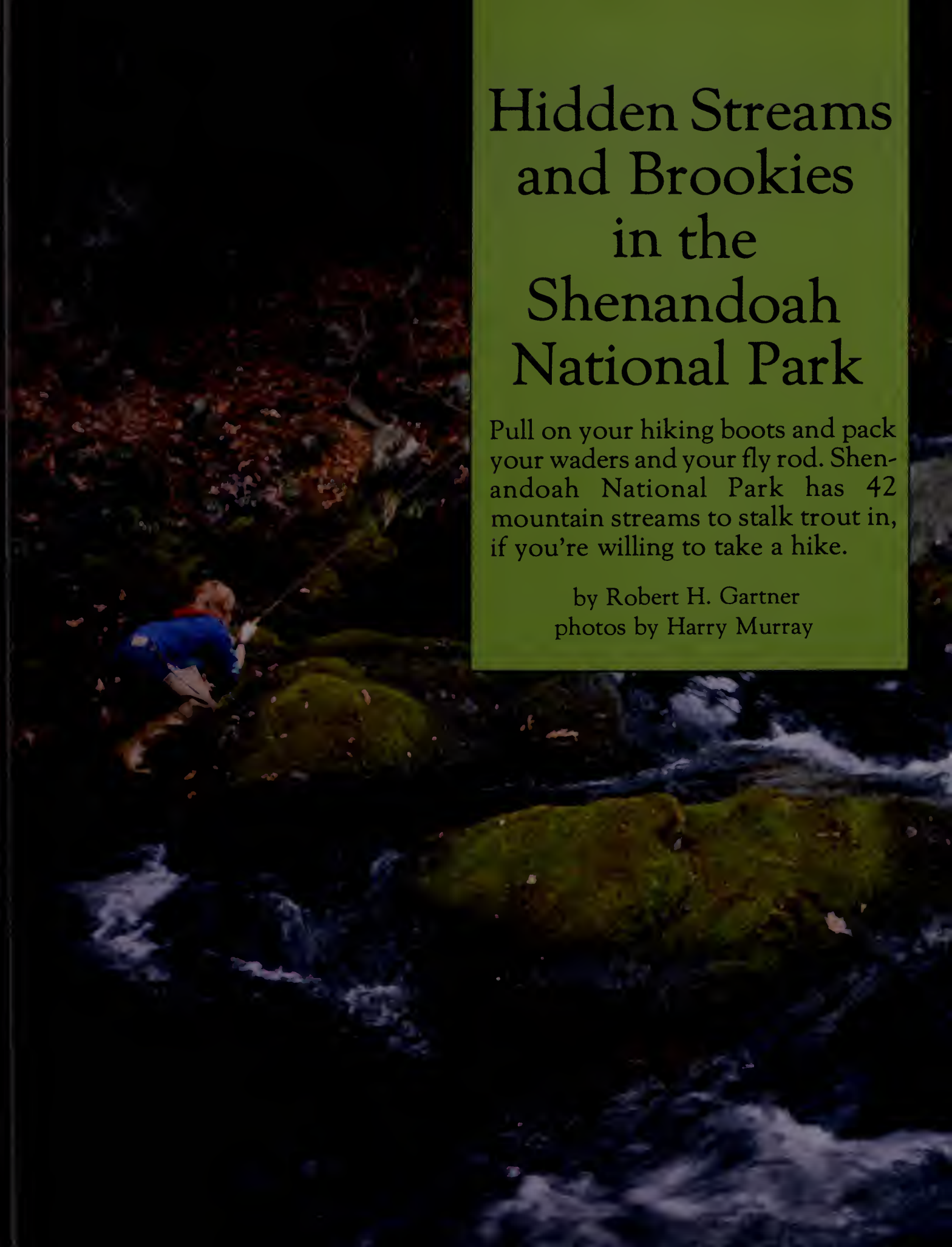
Paddle time: 4-6 hours. Numerous Class I river-wide riffles and several small islands between miles two and five. Many scenic vistas as river meanders between heavily wooded hills and broad agricultural flood plains. General store in Maidens ¼-mile across bridge from takeout.

Beaumont to Watkins:

Paddle time: 4-6 hours. Middle 1/3 of this float particularly scenic as river threads its way through numerous islands and Class I riffles. Backwaters from Bosher Dam last 3½ miles. Takeout on river right.

The James through Richmond:

The 7 miles of very scenic river through the city contain a number of dams and heavy, complex rapids, and should be undertaken only by experienced paddlers. Guidebooks and topo maps should be consulted along with information available from the Richmond Department of Recreation and Parks. River accessible at several points within the city's James River Park. River becomes tidal below Richmond.

A photograph of a person in a blue jacket and waders, crouched in a stream, casting a fly rod. The stream flows over large, moss-covered rocks. The surrounding area is filled with autumn foliage in shades of red, orange, and brown. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting a forest setting.

Hidden Streams and Brookies in the Shenandoah National Park

Pull on your hiking boots and pack your waders and your fly rod. Shenandoah National Park has 42 mountain streams to stalk trout in, if you're willing to take a hike.

by Robert H. Gartner
photos by Harry Murray

Lying along an 80-mile stretch of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Shenandoah National Park is rightfully regarded as one of the most scenic areas in the National Park System. However, underneath those hemlocks that most people only see the tops of riding by in their cars is another treasure—for trout fishermen. The park is one of the few remaining strongholds of native brook trout in the southeastern United States, and each of its 42 mountain trout streams provide hiding places for the brookie.

These streams are all somewhat similar in that they have steep gradients with alternating rapids and pools, host modest fly hatches, and are remote, requiring hikes of various lengths. Typical of any fishery, the more effort required to reach a stream, the less fishing pressure. Some of the park streams require good hikes of one to three hours. Other streams are more easily reached. Most of the time, you will be fishing alone, especially after June.

Spring thaws draw fishermen to the park as the fishing season begins on the third Saturday in March. With the streams in good condition (bank full, clear, 50-60°F), it's not uncommon to catch 30-40 fish in a day. Most are small (5-8 inches is typical) but some reach quite a respectable size.

Park fishing is restricted to single hook artificial lures. Small ultralight spinning lures such as Mepps, Colorado spinners, Rooster Tails, and Panther Martins are consistent producers. However, the majority of park fishermen use flies. Fly visibility and buoyancy are more important than pattern on these tumbling mountain streams where trout feed opportunistically rather than selectively. Hair-wing patterns such as the Royal Wulff or the local, Mr. Rapidan, are best. Other standard dry flies (sizes 12-18) are the Adams, Quill Gordon, and caddis patterns.

Nymphs (sizes 10-12) are good in the early season. The Gold-Ribbed Hares Ear, Quill Gordon, Dark Stonefly, and Olive Caddis Pupa should cover your needs. If the water is high and discolored, streamers are effective. Try the Olive Woolly Bugger or the



The Mister Rapidan

The Mr. Rapidan dry fly was created specifically for Shenandoah Park trout streams by guide/writer, Harry Murray. This high-floating, visible fly presents the brook trout with an insect imitation similar to the early season Quill Gordons and takes advantage of the large March Browns which follow. Harry's pattern for the Mr. Rapidan is:

Hook: Mustad 94845 (Barbless), or 94840, Sizes 12-18

Thread: 6/0 Prewaxed Herb Howard—Tan

Wing: Yellow Calf Tail

Tail: Dark Moose Body Hair

Body: Blend of 50% of FLYRITE #34 (Quill Gordon/Brown Yellow Drake) and 50% of FLYRITE #30 (March Brown).

Hackle: One medium brown and one grizzly hackle.

The distinctive wing of yellow calf tail was selected for easy visibility to counter two common early season conditions: high water and low light level.

Shenandoah Fly Hatches

For the fly fisherman who enjoys "matching the hatch," there are seven major insect hatches on the park streams. Listed below are the seven insects and their approximate emergence dates. The dates can vary each year due to changing weather and water conditions.

Insect	Emergence Dates
Quill Gordon (<i>Epeorus pleuralis</i>)	February 20 to May 10
Dark Blue Quill (<i>Paraleptophlebia adoptiva</i>)	February 20 to May 15
March Brown (<i>Stenonema vicarium</i>)	April 5 to May 20
Grey Fox (<i>Stenonema fuscum</i>)	April 20 to May 15
Light Cahill (<i>Stenonema canadense</i>)	April 20 to May 20
Little Yellow Stonefly (<i>Isoperla bilineata</i>)	April 15 to July 20
Giant Dark Stonefly (<i>Pteronarcys californica</i>)	April 10 to July 25

Black-Nose Dace in sizes 8-10.

After May, the fishing becomes tougher as the stream levels drop. During the summer, the low, clear pools demand long, light leaders, small flies (often sizes 18-24), and flawless presentation. Terrestrial imitations such as ants and beetles, are your main choices in the summer.

At all times, stealth and accurate presentation are the keys to taking fish. The trout are wary and demand a quiet approach. Noisily walking up to the water's edge will encourage the trout to do their disappearing act. Standard fishing tactics on park streams include crouching behind rocks and trees and crawling on hands and knees.

"Some of the other better known and highly regarded streams are the Rose, Hughes, Hazel, Conway, and Thornton Rivers, along with Hawksbill Creek, Big Run, Jeremy's Run, and Ivy Creek."

The streams are small and brushy, so light tackle is recommended. Fly rods should be from 6-7½ feet long, carrying 3-5 weight lines. Ultralight spinning rods from 4½-5 feet are best equipped with 2 or 4 pound line.


The Rapidan River is probably the most famous river in the park. Former president Herbert Hoover maintained a camp on the river and fished it frequently. The Rapidan and Staunton rivers are open all year under special regulations as fish-for-fun streams. The Rapidan boasts an outstanding population of native brook trout. It is an extremely popular stream especially in the spring when the Quill Gordons

Shenandoah Trout Streams

The 42 trout streams in the park are listed below according to the park district where they are located (north, central, south), the side of the park where located (east or west; top or bottom of the district), and the access to the stream (road or trail).

Stream	Side of Park	Access
North District		
Gooney Run	West (top)	County Road #631
Jeremy's Run	West (bottom)	County Road #611
Jordan River, South Fork	East (top)	County Road #629
Piney Run	East (bottom)	NPS Fire Road
Thornton River, North Fork	East (bottom)	County Road #612
Central District		
Brokenback Run	East (top)	NPS Fire Road
Cedar Run	East (middle)	NPS Trail
Conway River	East (bottom)	NPS Fire Road
Dry Run, North Fork	West (top)	County Road #669
Dry Run, South Fork	West (top)	County Road #696
Hawksbill Creek	West (top)	County Road #629
Hazel River	East (top)	Trail
Hogcamp Branch	East (middle)	NPS Trail
Hughes River	East (top)	NPS Trail
Little Hawksbill Creek	West (middle)	County Road #611
Naked Creek, East Branch	West (bottom)	County Road #759
Naked Creek, West Branch	West (bottom)	County Road #607
Pass Run	West (top)	U.S. 211
Pocosin Hollow Run	East (bottom)	Trail
Ragged Run	East (top)	Trail
Rapidan River	East (middle)	NPS Fire Road
Rose River	East (middle)	County Road #670
Shaver Hollow Run	West (top)	NPS Trail
South River	East (bottom)	NPS Trail
Staunton River	East (middle)	NPS Trail
Thornton River, South Fork	East (top)	U.S. 211
Whiteoak Canyon Run	East (middle)	NPS Fire Road
South District		
Big Run	West (top)	NPS Fire Road
Hawksbill Creek	West (top)	County Road #628
Ivy Creek	East (top)	Trail
Lewis Run, Upper	West (middle)	NPS Fire Road
Lewis Run, Lower	West (middle)	NPS Fire Road
Madison Run	West (middle)	NPS Fire Road
Moorman River, North Fork	East (bottom)	NPS Fire Road
Moorman River, South Fork	East (bottom)	NPS Fire Road
One-Mile Run	West (top)	County Road #892
Paine Run	West (middle)	NPS Fire Road
Pond Ridge Brook	East (bottom)	NPS Fire Road
Rip Rap Hollow Run	West (bottom)	NPS Fire Road
Rocky Mountain Run	West (top)	NPS Fire Road
Two Mile Run	West (top)	County Road #649
Turk Branch	East (bottom)	NPS Fire Road



A photograph of a small stream flowing over rocks in a forest. The water is clear and shallow, with several large, light-colored rocks visible in the foreground and middle ground. The surrounding area is covered with dense green foliage and trees, creating a lush, natural setting. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

The small trout streams in Shenandoah National Park do require stealth and careful casting to avoid spooking the brookies living in them.

begin hatching in February/March. Access to the Rapidan is also easier than for most other streams. It is near the town of Madison, off of Route 29.

Some of the other better known and highly regarded streams are the Rose, Hughes, Hazel, Conway, and Thornton Rivers along with Hawksbill Creek, Big Run, Jeremy's Run, and Ivy Creek.

Unless you intimately know the park and its trail system, you will need topographic maps to find the streams scattered throughout the park. There are three maps (north, central, south) of the park in the 15 minute series, published and updated by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. The maps are available from Murray's Fly Shop, Box 156, Edinburg, VA, 22824, 703/984-4212.

A Virginia fishing license is required to fish on all park streams. Also check the special park fishing regulations before setting out. Occasionally a stream which has been damaged by drought or overfishing may be closed to fishing to protect or replenish the trout population. The park regulations will note the closed streams.

The park has four developed campgrounds, but they are usually crowded during the fishing season. Most of the park is open to backcountry camping which requires a free permit available at park headquarters, visitor centers, and all entrance stations. The park office can send you information on trails, camping, lodges and cabin facilities, and fishing regulations. Address your request to Superintendent's Office, Shenandoah National Park, Luray, VA 22835, 703/999-2243.

A fishing trip to Shenandoah National Park rarely disappoints. Even if the hike is tough and few trout are caught, your reward is in knowing that these wild brook trout are protected and thriving in park streams and outwitting the best of us. □

Robert H. Gartner works for the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. and is the author of the recently published "National Park Fishing Guide."



"So cunning a way to take fish . . ."

by Lyle Browning

Until Henry VIII of England, severed ties with the Catholic Church, eating fish on Friday was officially part of everyone's life. After that it continued in the English speaking world because people were used to it. So to all, eating fish was no particular big deal.

European fisherfolk had been going rather far afield since at least the 1300s to find supplies of fish for Friday meals, fueling the ideas of explorers about what was on the "other side" of the Atlantic. Naturally, if you had an entire population which had to eat fish on Friday, you also had to have a large fishing industry capable of providing fish for them. Offshore and nearshore fisheries were commonplace and shared similar technology. The methods were for relatively deep water, in excess of 20-30 feet. The medieval monks also knew how to farm fish. The majority of monasteries have remnant fish ponds with interconnections for manipulating the populations. However, the fish so produced went mainly for local consumption at the monastery.

By the time Jamestown began, the European fishing industry was fully developed with its technology pointed toward deep sea exploitation of fish. But in Virginia the situation was different; the settlers were just a tiny enclave without the economic networks which we call "normal" today. For a modern example of how these networks operate, just consider the absurdity of a ripe banana arriving at your supermarket in the middle of winter. Merchants contract with tropical banana growers who then pick it, pack it and ship their pro-

In 1607, the masters of cunning angling were those men who didn't speak English.

duct halfway around the world. We drive to the supermarket and pick up a banana without realizing the chain of events necessary to see a banana on the shelf. A winter diet of greens, turnips and potatoes was normal for most of the world before this kind of network was made. No network, no bananas, no fish.

Monks were in short supply in Virginia, the only two, both Spaniards, having been eliminated by the Indians in the 16th century. They were also scarce in England, something to do with Henry VIII again. Thus, there was no one around with the know-how to farm fish and there was no in-place technology to cope with the broad shallow rivers with which Virginia is blessed and which England decidedly is not. So, how does the Jamestown colonist go about obtaining his Friday fish? He can't go to the local market, because there isn't any. And, certainly the "Gentlemen of Jamestown" didn't include fishermen in their refined midst. What to do?

One could go the route of rod fishing. Europe was in the beginning of mass production of specialized information. Books began appearing in the 16th century which described the fishing techniques that gentlemen might use to catch fish, or to "angell" for them. Apart from minor differences in equipment and allowing for the language of the day, they're not that different from those out on the market today. They all describe the equipment, the best areas, the types of fish to be caught, the trade "secrets," etc. so that other gentlemen may enjoy the gentle art. But even then, it's labor intensive and hardly mass production.

The other way is to go fishing on an industrial scale. But if you're part of a relatively large and growing population which has no supply lines to provide fish, much less boats enough to spare for fishing, you've got a problem.

That Virginia was bountiful in fish is not in dispute; the writing of all and sundry describe the types and numbers of fish and clearly state that fish were plentiful. The runs of sturgeon were legendary as well as those of other anadromous fish. Some later writers indicate that the reason people did less about stocking up for lean times was that the abundance of fish gave rise to false expectations that they would be available at all times.

The problem also appeared to be one of motivation, in that Sir Thomas Gates wrote in 1610:

"... And not to dissemble their folly, they suffered fourteen nets, which was all they had, to rot and spoil, which by orderly drying and mending might

have been preserved but being lost, all help of fishing perished."

And William Strachey wrote of the colonists' dismal lack of fishing ability in 1610:

"... But it pleased not God so to bless our labours that we did at any time take one quarter so much as would give unto our people one pound of meal apiece, by which we might have better husbanded our peas and oatmeal, notwithstanding the great store we now saw daily in our river. But let the blame of this lie where it is, both upon our nets and the unskilfulness of our men to lay them."

This is not to say that early attempts weren't made to rectify the manpower and tackle problems. In 1610 an attempt to fish the Bay was made without success and in the same year Captain Samuel Argall fished from Bermuda to Canada in an effort to find sufficient fish for the colony. They used the traditional seines developed from the European tradition of deep sea fishing.

The thing to be done, however, was to turn to the Indians, another large but soon to be shrinking population, with the technology and the expertise to fish broad and shallow rivers. An added bonus was that the Indians had mastered the art of fishing these rivers hundreds of years before the English arrived.

After all, the old colonials weren't the least bit shy about acquiring land by legal (\$24 for Manhattan), extra-legal (In the name of his/her most sovereign majesty, we claim these lands for: *you fill in the country*), hook or crook (here are some vacant fields and growing crops, we'll just move right in because we're here), or outright conquest (Governor Dale's exploits on Bermuda Hundred and a couple of other places).

Neither were they shy about acquiring food, harrying the locals for infractions great and small, or obtaining just about anything they wanted in the name of might, majesty, power and dominion. So, if they were all gentlemen and didn't know how to fish, and they were in a monkless society and the supply lines didn't exist, they turned to the Indians who had the technology,

the experience with the rivers and a long history of success at it.

Here is one area in a long and sometimes sordid relationship with the original inhabitants of the New World and the Old Dominion where the "superior in every other way" colonials unabashedly admired and copied the methodology of the Indians.

If one looks at the available literature on the subject, it is apparent that very little is written on Indian fishing techniques which isn't downright admiring. Thomas Hariot of the Roanoke Island colony wrote:

"They have likewise a notable way to catch fish in their rivers, for whereas

they lack both iron and steel, they fasten unto their reeds, or long rods, the hollow tail of a certain fish like to a sea crab instead of a point, wherewith by night or day they strike fishes, and take them into their boats. They also know how to use the prickles, and pricks of other fishes. They also make weirs, with setting up reeds and twigs in the water, which they so plant one with another, that they grow still narrower, and narrower. There was never seen among us so cunning a way to take fish withal, whereof sundry sorts they found in their rivers unlike ours, which are also of a very good taste. Doubtless it is a pleasant sight to see



the people, sometimes wading, and going sometimes sailing in these rivers, which are shallow and not deep, free from all care of heaping up riches for their posterity, content with their state, and living friendly together of those things which God of His bounty hath given unto them, yet without giving Him any thanks according to His deserts."

Robert Beverly wrote of 17th century Indian fishing that:

"At the falls of the rivers where the water is shallow and the current strong, the Indians use another kind of weir thus made. They make a dam of loose stone, whereof there is plenty at hand, quite across the river, leaving one, two, or more spaces or trunnels for the water to pass through. At the mouth they set a pot of weeds, wove in form of a cone, whose base is about three foot (wide) and ten (foot) perpendicular, into which the swiftness of the current carries the fish and wedges them so fast that they cannot possibly return."

From these descriptions, noble savage and Garden of Eden metaphors aside, it is apparent that striking fish from dugout canoes with spears, or bow and arrow; and the use of weirs and fish pots was normal practice among the Indians.

The fish dams or "V" dams reported by Beverly in Tidewater Virginia are also common in the Piedmont and Mountain areas of Virginia. There is a difficulty in dating these dams, however, since the design was used in later times for fishing and for providing sufficient water for the bateaux to bring produce to market. The bateauxmen were especially prone to divert water for their needs. They built "V" dams, wing dams and sluices. The unfortunate part of it is that where Indians built their dams, the same locations were needed for additional water for bateaux. The difficulty is then in distinguishing Indian from later construction and to add to the difficulties, the Army Corps of Engineers in the late 19th century also constructed "V" dams for their own reasons.

But, the evidence for Indian fishing

is rather common from archaeological sites and finds along waterways. Arrowheads, fish hooks and nets are all known from sites. Soon after the introduction of the bow and arrow into the New World, one finds broad triangular arrowheads, which to 20th century minds would appear to be ideal for taking fish. One also finds more of these arrowheads at locations near water than at inland sites. Other fishing tackle is also found, including fish hooks made of bone. While it can be argued that certain of the fish hooks made of stone had other purposes, it is difficult to imagine a fish hook which looks in every respect like a modern one except that it is made of bone could be anything other than a fish hook. For documentary evidence, we turn again to Beverly's writing of 17th century techniques:

"... the Indian invention of weirs in fishing is mightily improved by the English, beside which, they make use of seines, trolls, casting nets, setting nets, hand fishing and angling and in each find abundance of diversion. . . . they also fish from spilyards which is a long line staked out in the river and hung with a great many hooks on short strings, fastened to the main line, about four foot asunder. The only difference is that our line is supported by stakes and theirs is buoyed up with gourds."

Several years of continued fishing attempts brought rewards for the beginnings of the fishing industry in the waters of Virginia.

Indian manufacture of netting might be entirely from description if it were not for that most ubiquitous of artifacts of man's past, pottery. Virtually indestructible, easy to decorate and prone to break, pottery is at once the bulwark of the archaeologist's work and his particular problem. Virginia Indian pottery is decorated by impressions of everything from cords, to reeds, to fabric, to incised designs, and to nets. The net-impressed pottery clearly shows the size of the weave of the net marks left in the pottery. Pottery with this decoration is extremely common on sites with easy access to water. While pottery makes proving the existence of nets relatively easy, just how early nets were actually used is still

open to conjecture. Indirect evidence from objects identified as net sinkers puts them several thousand years B.C. Short of having a net survive, which we do not, there is no way to tell how far back nets were used.

The weirs, a "cunning a way to take fish withal," that Hariot mentioned as early as 1585 and which John White illustrated, show a method of construction not uncommon in the waters of Virginia today. The reeds and twigs have been replaced by cut poles, the nets by rope or monofilament, and the dugout canoes are now fishing boats with outboard motors, but the design and objective are remarkably unchanged. Despite Beverly's 1705 comments on improvements, the drawings show what the words can't: that a fisherman of the 20th century would know *exactly* how to fish a 16th century fish trap. No question.

The engineer would say that it is a matter of optimizing a design (like building a better moustrap). An old fishing rod looks a bit different, while its modern counterpart is perhaps technologically superior, but they both catch fish. The weirs may have slightly altered configurations, but they both catch fish. The differences are small because the fish behave the same way; the depth hasn't changed appreciably; and when it works well to start with, technology has to make quantum leaps before it is replaced.

Although the Indians have largely disappeared, their presence for thousands of years taking fish from the waters of Virginia can be shown by the artifacts excavated from countless sites along the waterways. Ask a farmer to do without corn, or truck farmers to do without tomatoes, squash or potatoes. These the Indian has given to our world. But from the water world, the Indian has given us the technology which, "notwithstanding the great store we now saw daily in our river," the colonists, and later the river fishing industry of Virginia were able to use to harvest instead of observe helplessly. That's an enduring legacy we all too often forget. □

Lyle Brouning is the editor of the *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Virginia*, and lives in Richmond.



River Birthing Grounds: The James Before Dams.

Dams block the way of fish pregnant with eggs, swimming to ancient spawning grounds. Can we open those areas up again?



The James River once teemed with fish. The early Indians made ample use of the abundant fish of the James, catching large quantities of American shad with seines made of bushes. Their children speared fish with pointed sticks as they swam on the flats. Remains of striped bass can be found in shell heaps made by the early Indians.

When the colonists arrived on the James in the early 1600s, they described the river as teeming with fish so thick that lazy settlers scooped them directly into their frying pans. Even considering the "stretch" introduced into fishing stories, the James River must have truly teemed with fish. But, all of the early settlers must not have been lazy, or used only frying pans to catch fish. Some of them set nets across streams at high tide and caught fish trapped behind the nets when the tide ebbed, often in quantities so great that they could not haul the catch to land.

These great numbers of fish were primarily anadromous fish, or fish that live the majority of their lives in the ocean, travelling once a year upriver to spawn. Some travelled as far up as

by Larry Hart

Opposite: A view of the Manchester Dam in Richmond, the oldest dam and the furthest dam downstream on the James River blocking fish migrations. **Above:** Old fishway on Belle Island Dam in Richmond, probably built in the early 1900s. It is poorly located on the James, and its design does not allow fish to pass upstream in any significant numbers; photos by Lynda Richardson.

Covington in Alleghany County to spawn and return to the sea. These fish runs were of great importance to the people living near the James River, as evidenced by this statement from the Virginia Commission of Fisheries annual report for 1875:

"We are informed that in former times, when the James river was unobstructed, and the shad had free access to its upper waters, the people, for twenty-five miles on both sides the main stem and on its tributaries, were wont to obtain and salt enough fish for consumption during the six warm months, when it was the most wholesome of diets—in fact, that it amounted to half a hog crop for the entire population of the basin of the James . . ."

The spawning runs of stripers, herring, shad, and sturgeon made for easy pickings for the colonists, but, by 1680, laws were passed which prohibited the taking of fish by certain methods. Evidently, the waters no longer teemed.

Still, as late as 1874, a single set of a seine near Norfolk across a tidal creek resulted in a catch of 1,500 striped bass. A few years earlier, a single seine

was reported to have yielded 600 striped bass averaging 80 pounds each. Striped bass were reported to have held their own until about 1885, after which declines were noticed. And, continued declines are still being reported to this day.

A comparison of commercial catches of the various fishes listed below show the declines over just the last 20 years, from 1966 through 1985, the last year with data reported. The catches listed below are the average harvest per year over the 10-year period:

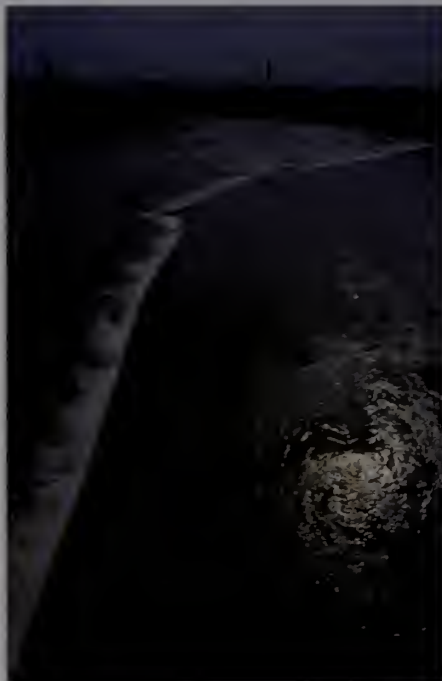
	1966-75	1976-85
River Herring	9,486 tons	725 tons
American Shad	1,114 tons	454 tons
Striped Bass	1,059 tons	226 tons
Hickory Shad	18.8 tons	0.5 tons

Comparing these two most recent 10-year periods, river herring have declined by 13-fold, American shad by 2-fold, striped bass by 5-fold, and hickory shad by 38-fold. In fact, no hickory shad were reported in the sample of commercial catches evaluated in 1985. One can only imagine what the decreases would be if we could compare today's figures with those from the time when the river "teemed with fish."

I would have liked to have reported on catches of the Atlantic sturgeon, but unfortunately, their numbers have declined to the extent that they are now a threatened species in Virginia. However, back in 1607, a sturgeon fishery became economically important within a few months of the arrival of the first settlers. Being familiar with the valuable sturgeon roe or caviar in Europe, they had high hopes that sturgeon from America would make them rich. But, sturgeon products did not store well, and the colonists soon lost interest in the sturgeon fishery. Sturgeon were even destroyed in great numbers by fishermen who considered them worthless.

Unlike sturgeon, river herring did keep well, and along with shad, they were considered the most valuable

food fish in Virginia. Their ability to store well when salted added to their value, and a thriving fishery resulted. However, like other fisheries before it,



View of Manchester Dam on the James River from Manchester Bridge in Richmond; photo by Lynda Richardson.

the abundance of river herring declined by the late 1800s and the fishery was no longer profitable.

The decline of American shad, however, was noticed much earlier. By the mid-1700s Virginians were aware that obstructions and dams in the rivers that stopped fish migrations, especially those of American shad, were harmful.

It made sense: if the fish no longer had as much habitat to spawn in, lots of fish wouldn't be reproducing. Thus, from 1740 until the Revolutionary War, an array of laws were passed requiring the removal of obstructions or the construction of fish passages. An example is an act passed in 1761:

"It being represented that Allan Howard, a gentlemen, hath erected a mill on Rockfish river in Amherst County, the dam whereof hath entirely obstructed the passage of fish up said river, to the great loss and prejudice of the inhabitants on the same, . . . said Howard should in two months pull down and destroy his said mill-dam

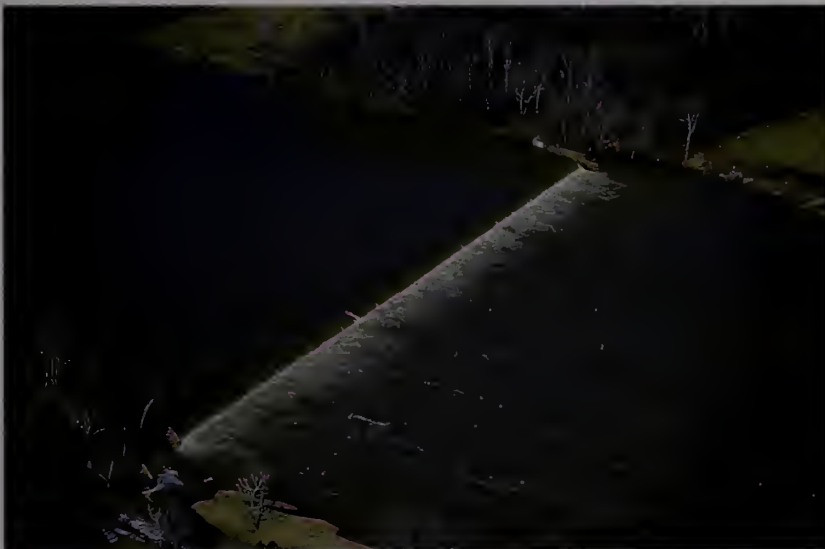
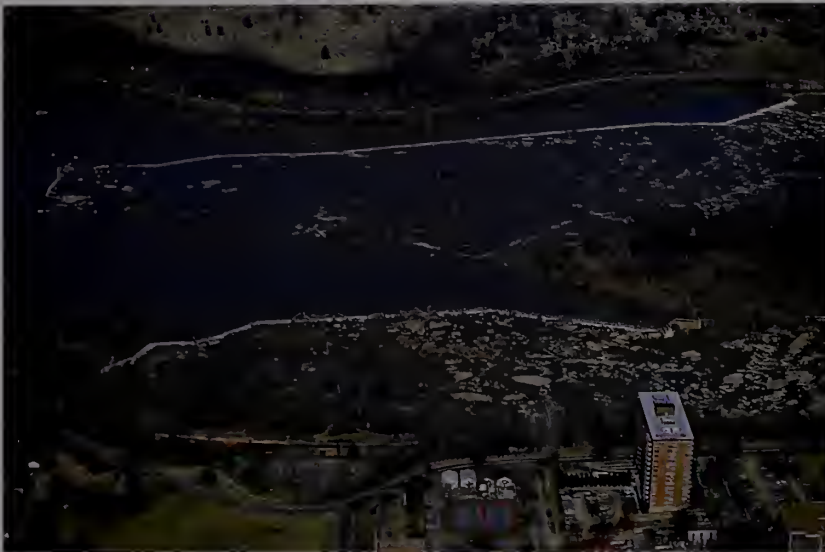
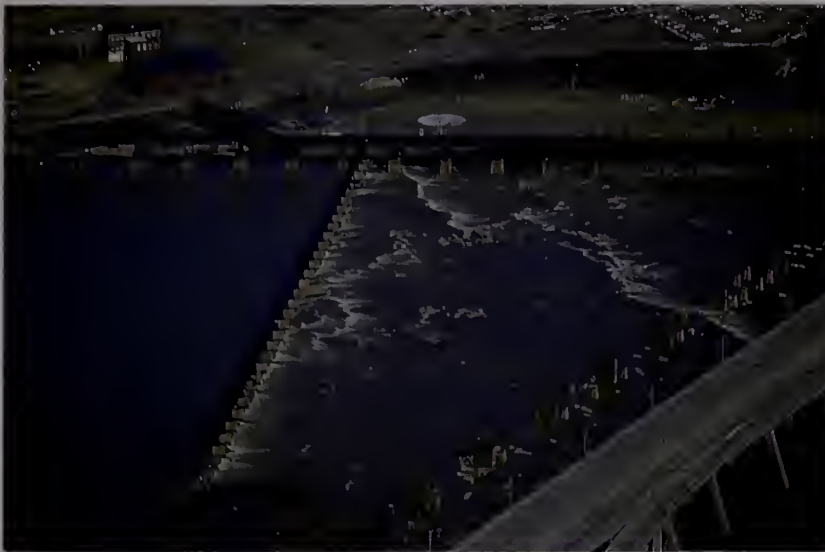
and mill house. . . and no dam on said river below the forks near Sam Morril's should be lawful."

Just 10 years later, an act was passed that defined the type of fishway to be constructed at dams, the months it must operate, and the fine for failure to comply, the forfeiture of five pounds of tobacco per day. Few if any fines were collected, however, due to the onset of the Revolutionary War.

Virginians must have accepted the changes in the fisheries, for it was not until the mid-1800s that the legislature reaffirmed its right to restrict the building of dams. But by that time, the damage was done. For in 1804, stone cutters, laborers, and undoubtedly slaves, began an ambitious project to dam a portion of the James in Richmond to supply water for a milling operation. The engineering was superb and the craftsmanship excellent, for this dam, which eventually extended all the way across the river, withstood the ravages of time and floods, and stands to this day. It is the Manchester Dam, that extends from Browns Island to the south bank and crosses under the Manchester (Route 60) Bridge. Migrations of any large numbers of fish up the James stopped about 1804, and haven't resumed to this day.

Dam building on the James continued. Boshers Dam was constructed in 1837, as were many other dams for many purposes, not the least of which was construction of the James River and Kanawha Canal system. In fact, by 1875 there were 21 dams on the James from Richmond to Buchanan, with an average height of 14.5 feet. Though fishways were installed at some of these dams over the years, they were inadequate and often poorly located. The James River as a spawning and nursery area to replenish the once teeming fish stocks of the lower James River and Chesapeake Bay was lost forever—or was it?

In 1930, the General Assembly again addressed the matter of dams and fish ladders. Just as in 1771, fish ladders were required, but the fine for failure to comply was increased to one dollar per day, probably little more than the value of the five pounds of tobacco fine, imposed 159 years earlier.



Top: Aerial view of Brown's Island Dam upstream, and a portion of Manchester Dam immediately downstream. Both block migrating fish. **Middle:** Aerial view of Belle Island Dam. Biologists believe that fish may be able to pass through the holes in this dam. **Bottom:** Aerial view of Boshers' Dam on the James River. This dam is the most formidable obstacle to fish passage in Richmond; photos by Roy Edwards.

So, here we are again, right where we were back in 1740, concerned over the reduction of fish in the lower James and the bay, and knowing that dams are part of the cause. A lot of good men have tried to move the fish up and down the river, and a lot of good men have failed. Will we be any different?

Surely a society that can send men to the moon and bring them back, can send fish up a river. Plus, we don't have 21 dams to worry with as we did back in 1875. Just five low dams block fish passage between Richmond and Lynchburg, and three of them are not in use at this time. Our technology in fish passage has greatly improved, and due to the excellent work of the State Water Control Board and all those that cooperated with them, water quality is again excellent. So, what are we waiting for?

Just as our forefathers must have done before us, we quibble. We quibble over whether tax funds should be spent to remove the abandoned dams. We quibble over guaranteeing that water flows will be maintained in the old canals that are old in the history of man, but very young in the history of fish. We quibble over changes in flows in the river from bank to bank when old dams are opened, even though the dams themselves have changed river flows for hundreds of years. Such behavior must be in the nature of man, for each day these issues appear to be so important to us that they stop progress that might restore the James to a river again "teeming with fish." □

Larry Hart is the Chief of the Lands and Engineering Division of the Game Commission. The writer wishes to credit Joseph G. Loesch, et.al., for most of the information provided in this article was published in the Job Completion Report for Virginia Dingell-Johnson Project F-39-P, Feasibility Study of Fish Passage Facilities in the James River, Richmond, Virginia, Dated December, 1983.

Setting the Hook on Walleyes

*Bruce Ingram interviews the experts on how to fish,
where to fish, and when to fish for walleyes.*

Walleyes—they are the mystery species among Virginia's gamefish. Most sportsmen don't seek them out at all, others catch them only by accident. Yet those who have mastered the basics of walleye angling have found this elusive creature well worth their efforts.

One such angler is Bob Taylor, a contracting engineer and part-time guide from Pamplin. He holds the distinction of landing the biggest marbleeye in the Old Dominion during 1984, a nine-pound, eight-ounce giant. Another successful outdoorsman is Sonny Davis, a tackle shop manager who hails from Roanoke. Davis possesses four walleye citations. They have this advice regarding equipment, seasonal approaches, and how-to techniques.

"First, I would recommend a baitcasting reel with six to eight-pound test clear, colorless mono," says Taylor. "I prefer a baitcasting outfit because it gives me a better 'feel' for walleyes which are usually light striking. The clear line doesn't spook them as easily. When you set the hook, use a quick wrist action. If you use your arm, you don't get the driving force to penetrate their toothy mouths."

The Pamplin resident also has tips for year-round walleye fishing.

by Bruce Ingram

*illustrations by
Michael Simon*

"July, August, and September are when I catch my biggest ones," he says. "They are usually hog females and they hang around the tip ends of deadfalls. I fish the last hour of daylight and all night for them. About 95% of my walleyes are caught at night because their milky eyes are so sensitive to light."

"Good summer lures are Rapala Shad Raps and Fat Raps that have a foil finish. Crank these lures down and let them drift back up. I get most of my hits when the plug is rising."

October is yet another good time for this member of the perch family. When the leaves begin to fall, look for pine-covered shorelines. Walleyes seem to

gravitate toward these areas because pines break up the sun's rays. This light-avoiding perch can then be taken with 1/8 to 1/16 ounce jigs dressed with three-inch grubs.

In October, Taylor also employs a flipping rod to outwit walleyes. He tosses smoke, brown, and orange worms rigged Texas-style and retrieves them as if fishing for bass. When the fish are balky, some anglers squirt one of the commercial scent formulas on their crawlers to make them more attractive.

November and December again find the Pamplin guide outwitting walleyes.

"I use a 1/2 to 1 ounce Gapens Bait Walker and 18 inches behind it—a shallow running Rebel or Rapala," he relates. "Walleyes are in tight schools on the bottom in early winter. You need a bait walker rig to keep a lure in their strike zone over a longer period of time. Jig 'n pigs in a crawfish pattern are good, too."

Vertical jigging is another method which will take early winter walleyes. Small Hopkin's spoons jigged seductively will often bring strikes. Sonny Davis experiences successful marbleeye angling even in January and February.

"In the winter, walleyes are in 50 to 55 feet of water," he says. "I reel in my lures very slowly, even slower than the



HEDDON "TINY TORPEDO"



rest of the year."

Davis prefers a weight forward Mepps Lusox spinner with a night-crawler attached for January and February action. He retrieves the spinner by bumping it along the bottom. The artificial's blade attracts walleyes and the trailing worm is the little something extra which triggers strikes. Minnows can also be used to sweeten a hook.

Like Bob Taylor, Davis employs floating 2½-inch Rebels or Rapalas during the winter. Davis, however, ties a ⅜-ounce barrel sinker about 18 inches in front of a minnow-like plug. The result is a lure suspended vertically just off the bottom. The creation is inched along—with the angler remaining alert and setting the hook at even the slightest tap.

The January-February pattern usu-

ally holds true until the end of winter. Early March may find marbleeyes moving up to the 40 to 50 foot range, but the same artificials and techniques remain effective. When the water temperature warms in late March, it's time to make some major adjustments.

"I fish only at night from the end of March throughout the rest of the spring," reveals Davis. "The action steadily increases with fishing peaking in May. Any topwater plug will do well then. Long slender lures with double propellers are especially good. Walleyes like a slurping sound caused by those types of artificials. Use a 'broken pattern retrieve.' Crank fifteen revolutions or so, stop—then give a few quick twitches."

During the spring, it's wise to prowl a lake's banks for marbleeyes. These

perch congregate along the shoreline at this season, trying to find feeder streams so that they can attempt to reproduce.

Good lures for spring action include Cordell's Boy Howdy and Tiny Torpedos. Flipping brown plastic worms with orange tails along weed bed edges will produce fish; crawfish-colored crankbaits are good then, too. Live baits also work well with this member of the perch family. Davis threads a size 1/0 weedless hook through the head of a live nightcrawler and lets it drift along just off the bottom. Occasionally, he will use a hypodermic needle to inject air into the worm. This keeps it floating off the bottom and reduces the possibility of snags. Small shad are another popular live bait.

The two walleye enthusiasts agree that this species is a good battler at any

R A P A L A "S H A D R A P"



season, though not a spectacular one.

"When a walleye hits your lure, it will be like you're hung on something," says Davis. "There won't be a massive jolt like a striper or largemouth—just a 'pause-like' sensation. You've got to be alert. Other fish will attack an artificial and hook themselves. But with walleyes you are the one who has to do the hooking. Once they're on, they get really stubborn and stay in one spot throwing their heads from side to side."

Though not known as great fighters, there is one area where these perch excel.

"Walleyes are the 'lobster of the lake' as far as I'm concerned," enthuses Davis. "I feel they taste better than any other freshwater fish. Try basting them with butter and lemon. Then bake

them at 350°F for 20 to 25 minutes. You'll see what I mean."

The Virginia Game Commission's Fish Division has worked hard to establish this Midwestern transplant. In 1984, their efforts resulted in 324 walleyes meeting the four pounds and above citation requirement and in 1985, the total rose to 469. In 1986, the number dropped slightly, to 423. Currently, the top walleye lake in the state is Smith Mountain with Kerr, Whitehurst, Claytor, and Philpott following closely behind. The New River traditionally is the best stream for this species. Other hot spots include Lakes Gaston, Manassas, Western Branch, Orange, Anna, and Chesdin.

There is no size limit on walleyes except at Gaston where they must be a minimum of 15 inches. The limit is 8

per day except at South Holston where only 5 may be creeled.

An excellent source for current walleye news concerning Smith Mountain, Claytor, and Carvins Cove is the All Huntin' and Fishin' Store, 311 7th Street, Salem, VA 24153 (703) 387-0900.

In summary, walleyes are a very challenging fish for Virginia's outdoorsmen. Their nocturnal feeding habits and tendency to merely "sample" a lure further complicate matters. But they are catchable with the proper methods and tackle. And once you've tasted their delicious fillets, you may very well join the growing number of walleye addicts. □

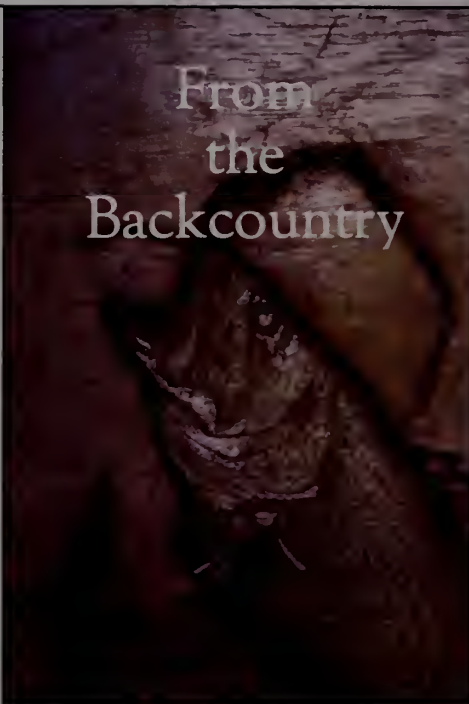
Bruce Ingram is the Virginia editor for Outdoor Life magazine and a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.

The Future Fisherman Foundation—Creating a New Generation of Fishermen

"Teach a kid to fish today and you'll provide him/her a lifetime of pleasure, and provide the resource with a new friend for tomorrow," stated Sharon Coe, Executive Director of the newly-formed Future Fisherman Foundation.

The Future Fisherman Foundation was founded by Berkley to promote the participation and education in fishing as well as the protection and enhancement of the aquatic resource. The Foundation was incorporated as a non-profit organization in February of 1986 and is developing materials to help educate and/or interest individuals in fishing.

"We feel fishing is an important activity for the family and for our youth of today and we want to help pass on that tradition," said Coe. During their first year, the Foundation developed a booklet called "Fishing Fun For Kids" that they make available for \$1.00 to cover postage and handling; they have launched a campaign called "Hooked on Fishing—Not Drugs" to show teens that there are alternative ways to utilize their time and release the tension that builds up in their lives; they have been actively involved in promoting aquatic resource



education programs; and they have been working with fishing tackle retailers across the country to help them promote fishing in their local areas.

For more information on the Future Fisherman Foundation and its materials, you can write to the Future Fisherman Foundation, One Berkley Drive, Spirit Lake, IA 51360.

Fishing Information Available

The Game Commission has informational booklets available that should be helpful to those people itching to get on the water this spring. "A Freshwater Fish Identification Booklet" illustrates and describes the different game fish in the state. Also, we have a specially printed Virginia highway map that lists the boats, access areas and wildlife management areas on the inside. These publications are available free, by writing to: Virginia Game Commission, Education Division, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. □

Future Fisherman Code

I Always Practice Safe Fishing. I am careful when casting; I handle all hooks carefully. I wear a life jacket when I am in a boat or when I am near deep or running water.

I Am A Courteous Fisherman. I don't litter. I pick up all extra line, leftover bait, candy wrappers and other trash. I don't get too close to someone else who is fishing.

I Obey Fishing Laws. I have a fishing license when required. I know the size, kind, and number of fish I am allowed to keep.

I Respect The Outdoors. I observe but do not disturb other wildlife that live around the water. I release fish right away if I don't plan to eat them.

I Invite My Friends to Go Fishing With Me, And Help Others Learn To Fish.

Goofed!

In our January photo issue, we mistakenly credited Chris Pague with taking the osprey photo on page 22. Although Pague would have been delighted with such a shot, actually a friend of his, Gillie Tomlinson, was the talented photographer. Our apologies to Ms. Tomlinson.

Also, in our 1986 Virginia Hunter's Guide, we provided an incorrect phone number for Fort A.P. Hill. The correct number for obtaining hunting information from the military reservation is 804/633-8219 or 633-8300.

Subscription Information

We've had several questions regarding subscriptions lately, so we thought we'd try to explain a few things for all our subscribers. First, because we go to press the last week in the month, we need to run our mailing labels around the 17th of each month. This means that unless your subscription check arrives in our Richmond office by the 12th of the month, we won't be able to get you into the system to receive the following month's magazine (This also applies to name and address changes). For example, if you sent a check in on the 14th of April, we wouldn't be able to start your subscription until June. However, if your check arrived by April 12th, you would begin your subscription with the May magazine. We are sorry that we can't extend that deadline, but the amount of time it takes to process subscriptions just won't let us.

Also, our magazines are mailed from Kingsport, Tennessee, where they are printed. Thus, it may take longer for the magazine to get to your home than it would had it been mailed from the Richmond office. □

Letters

January Compliments

We were going to let our subscription stop until we read the January '87 issue. Come on guys, you don't play fair. It hasn't been an easy move for us, leaving our beautiful home state. In

hunting, fishing, and general sightseeing at home, I personally have seen at least rough equivalents of most of the scenes pictured from the eastern end to the western tip of Virginia; from mallards or wood ducks on beaver ponds in the spring to Bath County woods with a dusting of snow coming down; and from great blue herons in Gloucester County marshes to trout in the Pedlar River.

Needless to say, please enter our subscription to *Virginia Wildlife* for three more years.

George B. Walker
Athens, Alabama

More on Dogs and Deer

Your article by Stephen C. Ausband in *Virginia Wildlife* "Of Dogs and Deer" in November 1986 was of great interest, as it so aptly describes conditions in Campbell County also. After deliberately posting your property, you have to contend with the dogs chasing deer through your property; the hunters on the side of the highway with their high-powered rifles, two-way radios and six pack. Is this really hunting? It appears to be a shooting as the chased deer nears the highway.

Can't the Commission give the landowners some relief? It's time for the hunters to do the hunting.

Lee Lindsay

Please let me fully support the article, "Of Dogs and Deer" and having just read the two letters in "From the Backcountry" in the February 1987 issue I just had to take time to sound off!!

How anyone can possibly justify hunting deer with dogs from a sporting standpoint or any other standpoint is beyond my imagination. I am one of those landowners whose property is literally taken over each fall by hoards

of pickups, with CB's blaring and occupied by people who spend most of their time rounding up dogs.

My road gets beat up, soil erosion is increased, bottles and papers are thrown around and the hunters have no regard for whose land they try to shoot from. I border on a piece of woods owned by a lumber company who have had a grandfathered right-of-way through my cultivated field. Yet, I wonder what right the lumber company has to lease their property to a club who then treats the right-of-way as a public road. On the other hand, it must be viewed as a non-public road when they shoot from it.

I am of the opinion, which is supported in a passive manner by most citizens who farm the land and live in our small communities, that if the question of hunting with dogs could ever be brought up for a popular vote, it would be voted out.

I have hunted in many places around the world, including big game hunting in Africa, but I have never seen anything so unsportsmanlike as riding around in pickups trying to keep in touch with some deer dogs.

Walter A. Cullen
Alexandria

Once again I spent another hunting season watching armies of inconsiderate deer hunters swarm all over the countryside like so many guerilla units waging undeclared war. I am a hunter. I have been hunting in Virginia for 40 years. I hunt mainly quail, and I use a dog in pursuit of game. So I have mixed emotions about the issue of hunting deer with dogs. I would not want a deer hunter to attempt to deprive me of my bird dog. But I am also a conservationist, a volunteer Hunter Education Instructor, and a person very much interested in ethical hunting. I am also concerned about the future of hunting. The issue I address here is deer hunting with dogs.

I think the organized hunt clubs with their dogs, their 4-wheel drive trucks, and their CB radios do major damage to the reputation of hunters among the general public. Here in Accomack County they seem to think they own the back roads, and are at liberty to hunt anywhere they choose. They routinely release their dogs at the edge of a farm, with or without the owner's permission, and then they deer hunt on that property under the guise of "retrieving" their dogs. The dogs, of course, follow the deer wherever they run, and chase them along well-established escape routes. Frequently, these escape routes cross secondary roads near homes, schools, and churches. The club members warn each other via 2-way radio of the deer's likely crossing point, and this is where these shooters then position themselves in anticipation of getting a shot at a crossing deer. They line the shoulders of the back roads, frequently as dense as five or six or more per mile, and wait. They shoot at deer on or very near the roads, or they sneak into the woods or fields close by, frequently trespassing, with complete disregard for the wishes of property owners. In short they personify the term "slob hunter." And they give all of us a bad reputation.

I realize that using dogs in pursuit of deer is a local option issue, often hotly debated. But I suggest that by allowing it to continue we are dooming the sport of hunting to extinction. The 80% of the general population who have no strong feelings about hunting, who are merely non-hunters, will gradually join the ranks of those 10% who are anti-hunters, and together form a coalition which insists that all hunting be outlawed.

Deer hunters can enjoy the sport just as much by still-hunting, stalking, or using a tree stand . . . all three of which are proven methods of harvesting deer.

Ash Cutchin
Onancock

Woodcarving of two turkeys by Rock Ramsey; photo by Roy Edwards.



Carving Life in Wood

Last year, Willard (Rock) Ramsey of Colonial Heights was working hard on a special project. One hundred hours of work with a magnifying glass, x-acto knife, dental picks, and hand-made tools later, Rock had finished "Bear Troubles" an exquisite 11" x 17½" wood carving donated to the Game Commission for the International Black Bear Conference in Williamsburg.

Rock has been carving ever since his grandfather put a piece of wood and knife in his hands at age nine. Using basswood and mahogany, he creates detailed reliefs of wildlife subjects. Often, he will take a cover from *Virginia Wildlife*, and bring it to life in wood. "I have to get an ugly stage in carving," says Rock, "and then just keep on going past it until it starts getting pretty again." That is an understatement. On his wall is a carving of a pair of mergansers, his favorite, carved in six dimensions.

In fact, the entire wall of his den is covered with carvings, most of them

up for sale, ranging from \$400-\$450 for the larger ones. The picture above was taken from these. When does the master know when a carving is finished? Rock turns and winks at his wife. "I don't until the 'Boss' tells me to."

Camping on Wildlife Management Areas

The Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries adopted a new policy on camping on Commission-owned lands on January 23, 1987. The policy reads: "Except as otherwise posted, primitive camping (no developed facilities) is permitted on Commission-owned lands not to exceed a maximum of 7 days and in groups not to exceed three camping units. Camping is prohibited on or within 100 yards of any Commission-owned or controlled boat ramp or fishing lake."

